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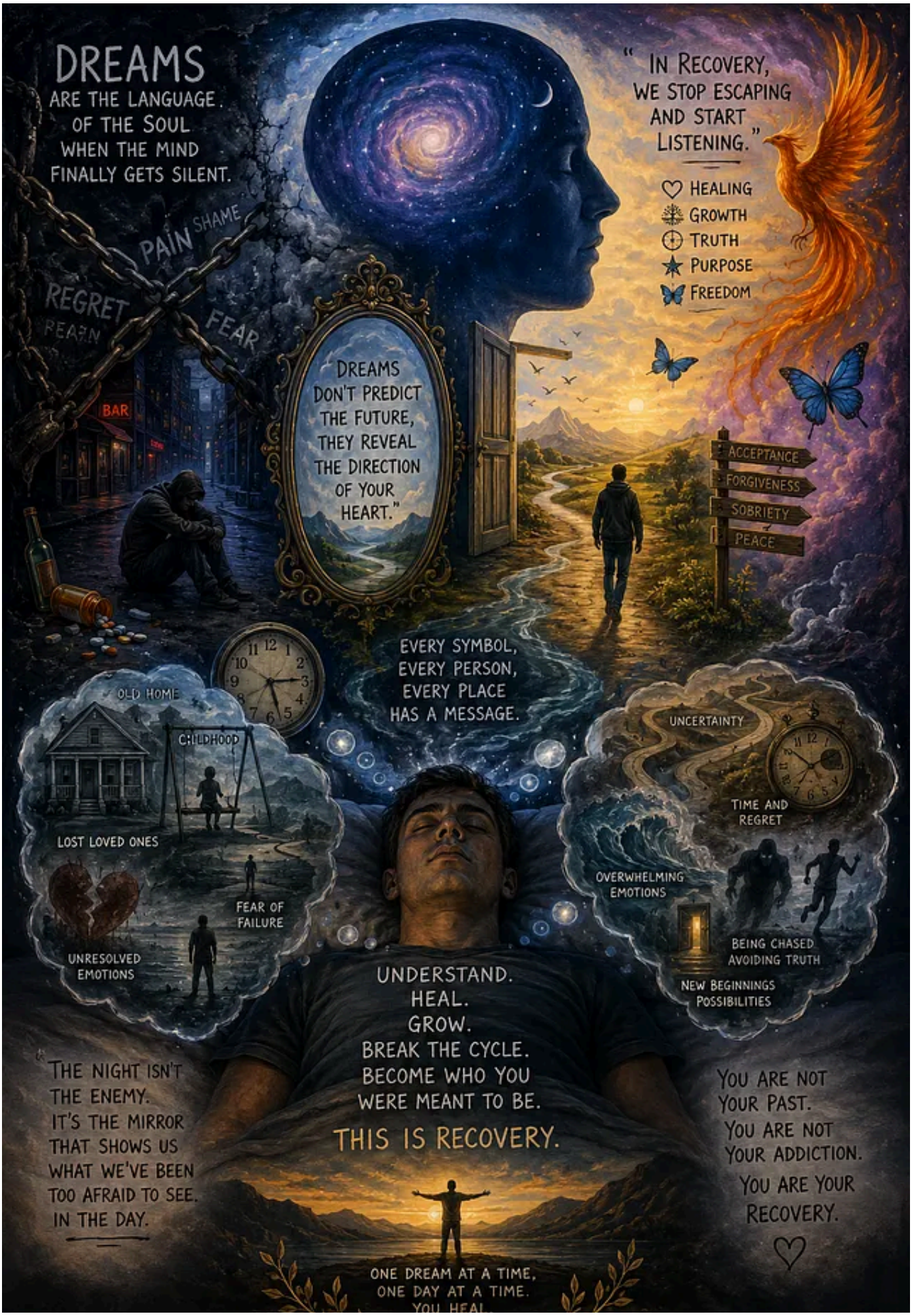
Marcel Ray Duriez 16 min read · May 10, 2026


DREAMS
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THIS IS RECOVERY.
THE NIGHT ISN'T THE ENEMY.
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IN THE DAY.
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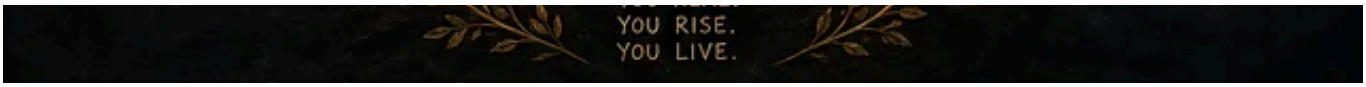
YOU ARE NOT YOUR ADDICTION.
YOU ARE YOUR RECOVERY.
ONE DREAM AT A TIME,
ONE DAY AT A TIME.
YOU HEAL.



Marcel Ray Duriez — Explaining the Work Behind “Dreams and Recovery”

The work presented here reflects a multidisciplinary recovery method that blends philosophy, psychology, emotional symbolism, neuroscience, spirituality, and group recovery discussion into one unified framework. What makes this approach different is that it does not treat addiction as only chemical dependency. Instead, it examines addiction as a disruption of emotional processing, identity, memory, meaning, and self-awareness.

Recovery Group on Dreams

Dreams, Symbolism, Addiction, Memory, and the Human Mind

Three Reflective Moral Paragraphs

1. Dreams as the Voice Beneath the Noise

Dreams are often the hidden language of the human mind. During addiction, people spend years numbing emotions, suppressing pain, escaping memories, and avoiding unresolved truths. When the body finally slows down in recovery, the mind begins to speak again. Dreams may become intense because the subconscious no longer has chemicals blocking emotional processing. A recovering person may dream about old homes, lost relationships, childhood fears, death, shame, drugs, or impossible situations because the brain is trying to reconnect broken emotional pathways. Dreams remind us that the human soul cannot stay silent forever. Even when a person hides from themselves during the day, the night often reveals what still needs healing.

2. The Symbolism of the Recovering Mind

A dream is rarely just a dream. A house may symbolize the self. Water may represent emotion. Darkness can represent fear, confusion, grief, or depression. Trains, clocks, roads, and bridges may symbolize time, change, or transitions in life. Many addicts dream about using substances long after sobriety begins, not always because they truly want the drug, but because the brain remembers emotional survival attached to the substance. Recovery forces the mind to rebuild identity, and dreams become symbolic rehearsals of fear, temptation, guilt, hope, and transformation. The recovering brain is attempting to reorganize memory, emotion, and meaning at the same time.

3. Recovery Means Listening Instead of Escaping

One of the deepest lessons of recovery is learning not to run from what the mind is trying to say. Dreams can reveal trauma, loneliness, regret, unresolved conflict, spiritual searching, or emotional exhaustion. Some dreams may not predict the future, but they may reveal the emotional direction of a person's life. Recovery teaches people to stop anesthetizing their emotions and instead become observers of their own thoughts, symbols, and feelings. A dream can become a mirror. The question is not whether every dream is literally true, but whether the emotions inside the dream point toward something inside the person that still needs understanding, forgiveness, acceptance, or healing.

Long Essay

Dreams, Addiction, Philosophy, Psychology, and the Symbolic Mind

Human beings have questioned dreams for thousands of years. Ancient civilizations believed dreams were messages from gods, warnings of danger, glimpses into the future, or reflections of the soul. Philosophers, scientists, psychologists, spiritual leaders, and recovering addicts alike have all attempted to understand why the mind creates dreams and what purpose they serve.

The mystery of dreams becomes even deeper when viewed through the lens of addiction and recovery.

A recovering addict often experiences dreams differently than the average person. Many people in recovery report vivid nightmares, dreams about relapse, dreams about deceased loved ones, emotionally overwhelming visions, symbolic locations from childhood, or repeated scenarios involving fear, guilt, or survival. These dreams may feel intensely real because addiction disrupts emotional processing, memory systems, dopamine regulation, trauma responses, and sleep cycles.

Scientifically, dreams are most associated with REM sleep — rapid eye movement sleep — where the brain becomes highly active while the body rests. Research suggests dreams may help process emotional memory, reinforce learning, regulate stress, and reorganize information from waking life. During recovery, the brain is attempting to heal damaged neurotransmitter systems and emotional circuitry. This may explain why dreams become more emotionally vivid after substances are removed.

Psychologically, Sigmund Freud believed dreams were expressions of unconscious desires and repressed emotions. He viewed dreams as disguised wish fulfillment hidden beneath symbolic imagery. Later, Carl Jung expanded the idea by suggesting dreams were not only personal, but

symbolic reflections of universal human experiences called archetypes. Jung believed dreams used symbols — shadows, water, death, rebirth, journeys, houses, mirrors, and figures — to communicate with the conscious mind.

In recovery settings, these theories become highly relevant.

A person addicted to alcohol or narcotics may suppress grief, shame, fear, trauma, abandonment, or identity confusion for years. Substances temporarily numb emotional pain while simultaneously preventing healthy emotional integration. Once sobriety begins, the subconscious mind may start releasing years of emotional material through dreams.

This is why many recovering individuals experience "using dreams," where they relapse in the dream and wake up terrified or ashamed. Clinically, these dreams are extremely common. Research suggests these dreams may reflect anxiety about relapse, unresolved cravings, fear of failure, or the brain's memory associations with addiction. They are not necessarily signs that someone wants to relapse. Instead, they may represent the brain rehearsing emotional conflict.

Dreams can also reveal symbolic truths about recovery.

A collapsing house may symbolize a collapsing identity.
A flood may symbolize overwhelming emotion.
An endless road may symbolize uncertainty about the future.
A childhood bedroom may represent unresolved emotional development.
A clock may symbolize fear of time, aging, regret, or mortality.
Being chased may represent avoidance of truth or responsibility.
Death in dreams may symbolize transformation rather than literal death.

In philosophy, dreams have also raised questions about reality itself. René Descartes questioned whether humans could ever truly know if they were awake or dreaming. This philosophical doubt suggested that perception itself might be unreliable. Dreams blur the boundary between imagination, memory, emotion, and reality. For addicts, this idea becomes emotionally powerful because addiction itself often distorts perception and reality. Recovery, therefore, becomes not only physical sobriety, but a reawakening into truthful awareness.

Modern neuroscience proposes that dreams may help regulate emotional overload. The brain may replay stressful experiences in symbolic form to help reduce emotional intensity over time. Some researchers believe dreams are connected to memory consolidation, emotional adaptation, and survival simulation. Others suggest dreams are partially random brain activity interpreted into stories by the conscious mind.

Yet despite scientific explanation, dreams remain emotionally spiritual experiences for many people.

People often dream of deceased loved ones, forgotten memories, spiritual encounters, impossible landscapes, or deeply emotional conversations. Whether these experiences are neurological, symbolic, spiritual, or psychological, they carry emotional meaning. The recovering person must learn not to obsess over every dream literally, but to ask reflective questions:

“What emotion is this dream trying to reveal?”
“What fear have I not addressed?”
“What memory still hurts?”
“What truth am I avoiding?”
“What part of myself is trying to heal?”

Dreams may not always provide answers, but they often reveal emotional direction.

Addiction disconnects people from themselves. Recovery reconnects them. Dreams may become part of that reconnection process.

A healthy recovery approach does not interpret dreams as magical prophecy, but neither does it dismiss them completely. Instead, recovery encourages awareness, journaling, emotional reflection, group discussion, therapy, spiritual exploration, and honest self-examination.

Dreams can become tools for healing when approached with humility rather than fear.

The addicted mind often spends years escaping consciousness. Recovery asks the person to become conscious again — not only during the day, but within the emotional world of the night as well.

Dreams may ultimately remind us of one profound truth:

Even when the conscious mind is silent, the human spirit continues speaking.

15 Recovery Group Questions on Dreams

1. What dreams do you remember most clearly, and why do you think they stayed with you?
2. Have you experienced dreams about relapse, substances, or old environments during recovery?

3. Do you believe dreams reflect emotion, memory, fear, spirituality, or random brain activity?
4. What symbols appear repeatedly in your dreams?
5. Have your dreams changed since becoming sober or entering recovery?
6. What emotions do you usually feel when waking from intense dreams?
7. Could recurring dreams point toward unresolved trauma or stress?
8. Do certain people appear in your dreams repeatedly? Why might they?
9. What role does guilt or regret play in dreams during addiction recovery?
10. Have dreams ever helped you recognize something emotionally important in your life?
11. Why do you think the mind revisits old memories during sleep?
12. Can nightmares sometimes represent healing instead of danger?
13. What is the difference between escaping reality and processing reality?
14. How can journaling dreams help emotional awareness in recovery?
15. If your dreams were trying to teach you one lesson right now, what do you think that lesson would be?

Scientific & Psychological Foundations of Dream Theory

Research from organizations such as the American Psychological Association and the Sleep Foundation discusses how dreams are associated with emotional processing, REM sleep, stress regulation, and memory consolidation.

The Neuroscience perspective suggests dreaming may assist with emotional integration and learning.

Theories from Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung continue influencing modern interpretations of symbolism, unconscious thought, and archetypes in dreams.

Recovery clinicians also acknowledge that vivid dreams and relapse dreams are common during early sobriety because the brain is healing from disrupted sleep patterns, dopamine imbalance, emotional suppression, and trauma exposure.

Breath, Life, Death, and Recovery

A spiritual reflection connected to the Twelve Step journey of AA and NA

In many spiritual traditions, the breath of God is seen as the beginning of life itself. In the Bible, God breathed life into Adam, meaning that life was not only physical, but spiritual, emotional, and moral. That same idea can connect deeply to recovery in both Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. The Big Books of recovery speak about surrender, spiritual awakening, ego death, and finding a Higher Power. In many ways, recovery itself is a rebirth of breath, mind, body, and soul.

A person in addiction often lives disconnected from that breath of life. Addiction can create emotional numbness, spiritual emptiness, shame, guilt, fear, and isolation. The person may still physically breathe, but emotionally and spiritually they feel dead inside. AA and NA teach that healing begins when a person admits powerlessness and reconnects with something greater

than themselves. That is where the breath returns. Recovery becomes more than sobriety — it becomes resurrection of identity.

The Stages of Death and Recovery Correlation

1. Denial

In addiction, denial is one of the strongest defenses. The person refuses to see the destruction around them. This mirrors the first emotional stage of death and grief. AA and NA speak heavily about honesty because denial keeps the soul trapped. The addict says, “I’m fine,” while internally collapsing.

2. Anger

As truth appears, anger follows. Anger at self, family, God, trauma, society, or life itself. In recovery meetings, many people first arrive carrying rage because substances once numbed pain. Once sober, the emotions surface. This stage is part of emotional awakening.

3. Bargaining

This is where the addict says:

- “Maybe I can still drink sometimes.”
- “Maybe I can use differently.”
- “Maybe I can control it this time.”

The Big Books describe this mental obsession clearly. Bargaining is the mind trying to avoid surrender.

4. Depression

Once reality settles in, grief arrives. The addict mourns:

- Lost time
- Relationships
- Health
- Identity
- Childhood wounds
- The life they could have lived

This stage is painful because the person is finally feeling emotions again instead of escaping them. Yet this pain often becomes the doorway to true spiritual growth.

5. Acceptance

Acceptance in recovery is not weakness. It is surrender. AA and NA teach that acceptance brings peace. The person begins saying:

- “I cannot do this alone.”
- “I need help.”
- “I am willing to change.”

This is where spiritual breathing begins again.

God as the Living Part Within You

The correlation between God and recovery is powerful because many recovering people describe feeling spiritually dead before sobriety. The Higher Power concept teaches that there is still a living spark inside the individual even after years of addiction.

The breath of God can be understood symbolically as:

- Consciousness
- Hope
- Morality
- Love
- Truth
- Emotional awareness
- Spiritual connection

When a person reconnects with these things, they often describe it as "coming back to life."

Marcel's Reflection Style Paragraphs

Moral Reflection 1

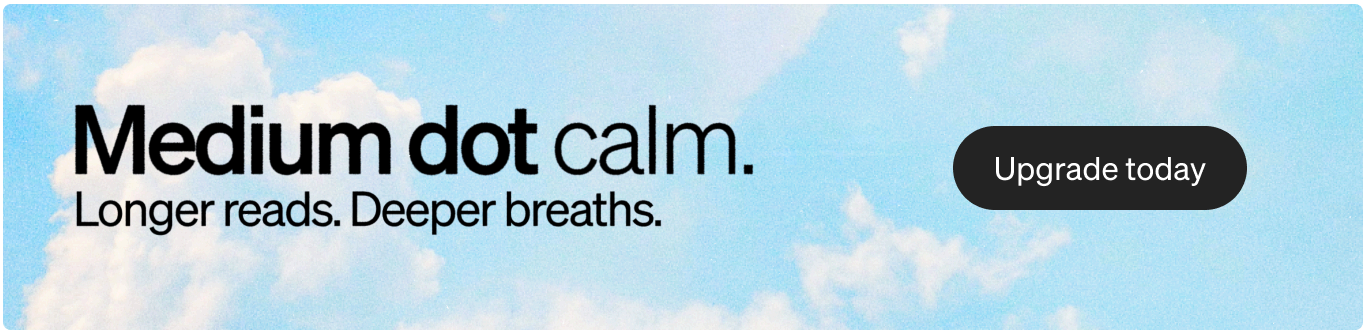
A person can lose themselves long before physical death occurs. Addiction can slowly remove identity, honesty, connection, and peace. Recovery is the process of breathing life back into the soul one day at a time.

Moral Reflection 2

The stages of grief are not only about dying; they are also about transformation. In recovery, the old self must often spiritually die so a healthier self can emerge through honesty, humility, and connection.

Moral Reflection 3

God's breath can be understood as the ability to feel, love, think clearly, and care again. Recovery reminds people that even after darkness, the human spirit still has the ability to awaken and heal.



Recovery Questions for Group Discussion

1. What does "spiritual death" mean to you?
2. Have you ever felt emotionally numb during addiction?
3. Which stage of grief do you relate to most in recovery?
4. What does surrender mean in your life today?

5. How has recovery changed your understanding of God or a Higher Power?
6. What parts of yourself feel alive again in sobriety?
7. How does honesty help a person spiritually heal?
8. What emotions were hardest to face after becoming sober?
9. What does the phrase “breath of life” mean to you personally?
10. How can recovery help someone rediscover purpose?

“God, I offer myself to Thee —
to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt.
Relieve me of the bondage of self,
that I may better do Thy will.
Take away my difficulties,
that victory.

“I Am Powerful, I Have Faith, Hope, and a Right to a Life Worth Living”

Every human being has moments where life feels heavy, uncertain, or painful. Addiction, depression, grief, trauma, anxiety, guilt, and failure can make a person forget who they truly are. Many people begin to believe they are broken beyond repair, unworthy of love, or incapable of change. Yet deep within every person there remains something alive — a spark of strength, dignity, and humanity that cannot be fully destroyed. To say, “I am powerful, I have faith, hope, and I have a right to a life worth living,” is not arrogance. It is an act of survival, courage, and spiritual awakening.

Power does not always mean physical strength or control over others. True power is the ability to continue standing after life has tried to break you. It is

waking up another day despite emotional pain. It is learning to ask for help when pride once kept you silent. It is choosing recovery instead of destruction, honesty instead of hiding, and healing instead of surrendering to hopelessness. In recovery programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, people learn that power can return through humility, community, spiritual growth, and personal responsibility. The person who once felt powerless slowly discovers inner resilience.

Faith is not only belief in God; it is belief that change is still possible even when evidence seems small. Faith is continuing forward before seeing results. A person in darkness may not yet see the sunrise, but faith allows them to believe morning still exists. Recovery often begins with borrowed faith. Someone enters a meeting unable to believe in themselves, yet others believe in them until they can believe again. Faith becomes the bridge between suffering and transformation.

Hope is equally important because hopelessness is one of the most dangerous emotional states a person can experience. When hope disappears, people stop fighting for themselves. Hope gives meaning to effort. It reminds individuals that pain is temporary, growth is possible, and the future does not have to mirror the past. Hope says:

- “My mistakes do not define my entire identity.”
- “I can still grow.”
- “I can still love and be loved.”
- “My story is not over.”

To believe you have a right to a life worth living is a profound truth. Every person deserves dignity, peace, emotional safety, purpose, and the

opportunity to heal. Many people struggling with addiction or trauma carry shame so deeply that they begin punishing themselves emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. They may believe happiness belongs to everyone except them. Yet recovery teaches that human worth is not erased by suffering, relapse, mistakes, or brokenness. A person still deserves compassion and the chance to rebuild.

A life worth living is not necessarily a perfect life. It is a life where a person can breathe freely, express emotions honestly, build healthy relationships, and find meaning in existence. It is a life where someone can look in the mirror and slowly begin forgiving themselves. Sometimes the smallest victories become the most powerful:

- getting out of bed,
- attending a meeting,
- apologizing sincerely,
- staying sober one more day,
- journaling emotions,
- helping another human being.

These moments rebuild identity little by little.

The phrase “I am powerful, I have faith, hope, and I have a right to a life worth living” becomes more than words. It becomes a declaration against despair. It is a reminder that the human spirit can survive incredible darkness and still search for light. Healing does not erase pain from the past, but it transforms suffering into wisdom, empathy, and strength.

Moral Reflections

Reflection 1

Strength is not measured by never falling apart. Strength is measured by the courage to rebuild after life has wounded you.

Reflection 2

Faith and hope often begin as tiny sparks inside a tired mind, yet even a small spark can eventually light an entire path forward.

Reflection 3

Every human being has the right to heal, grow, and discover meaning again, regardless of how lost they once felt.

Recovery Questions

1. What does personal power mean to you today?
2. When have you felt hopeless, and what helped you continue?
3. How has faith played a role in your healing?
4. What would a “life worth living” look like for you?
5. What strengths have you discovered through suffering?
6. How does self-forgiveness affect recovery?
7. What gives you hope during difficult moments?
8. How can helping others strengthen your own healing?

9. What negative beliefs about yourself are you trying to overcome?
10. What does emotional freedom mean to you?

Marcel Ray Duriez — Explaining the Work Behind "Dreams and Recovery"

The work presented here reflects a multidisciplinary recovery method that blends philosophy, psychology, emotional symbolism, neuroscience, spirituality, and group recovery discussion into one unified framework. What makes this approach different is that it does not treat addiction as only chemical dependency. Instead, it examines addiction as a disruption of emotional processing, identity, memory, meaning, and self-awareness.

In this work, dreams are used as a therapeutic doorway into the subconscious mind.

The philosophy behind the group suggests that many recovering individuals carry unresolved emotional material that substances once suppressed. When sobriety begins, the mind becomes more emotionally active, especially during sleep and dreaming. The dreams themselves become symbolic narratives containing fragments of memory, fear, trauma, guilt, hope, grief, and transformation.

This method combines several layers:

- Philosophical interpretation
- Psychological analysis
- Recovery group reflection
- Symbolic meaning and archetypes

- Emotional journaling
- Moral self-examination
- Group discussion and shared interpretation

The artwork visually demonstrates these layers at the same time.

The sleeping individual at the center represents the recovering mind. Around the figure are symbolic dream fragments:

- clocks representing time and regret,
- roads representing recovery and direction,
- darkness representing fear and addiction,
- butterflies and birds representing transformation,
- mirrors representing self-reflection,
- doors representing opportunity and change,
- childhood homes representing emotional memory,
- being chased representing avoidance of truth.

The deeper clinical meaning of the work is that recovery is not only about stopping substance use. Recovery is about rebuilding the relationship between:

- consciousness,
- memory,
- emotion,

- identity,
- morality,
- and purpose.

The framework also reflects ideas associated with:

- subconscious processing,
- trauma reintegration,
- symbolic cognition,
- emotional regulation,
- and existential philosophy.

Clinically, this type of group works because it creates emotional engagement. Many traditional recovery discussions remain surface-level and focus only on behavior. This style instead invites participants into introspection. People begin connecting their emotions to symbols, memories, fears, and patterns. Once individuals emotionally identify with the material, participation increases significantly.

Another major feature of Marcel Ray Duriez's work is the blending of educational structure with emotional accessibility. Complex concepts from psychology and philosophy are translated into understandable imagery and reflective discussion questions that people in recovery can emotionally relate to. This reduces defensiveness and encourages honesty within group settings.

The method also uses:

- metaphor-based learning,
- symbolic thinking,
- emotional storytelling,
- and reflective questioning.

These techniques activate memory and emotional association more effectively than lecture-based teaching alone.

From a recovery standpoint, the work implies that dreams are not simply random hallucinations. Instead, dreams may function as emotional mirrors — revealing internal conflicts, unresolved pain, spiritual searching, fears of relapse, identity reconstruction, and subconscious healing attempts.

The central philosophical belief underneath the piece is this:

> The addicted person spent years escaping consciousness.
> Recovery becomes the process of learning how to consciously face oneself again.

The reason this type of group often resonates deeply is because it gives recovering individuals permission to explore the parts of themselves they previously avoided. Instead of suppressing emotion, the group reframes emotion as information.

In many ways, the artwork and essay together form:

- a recovery philosophy,
- a symbolic emotional map,

- a therapeutic discussion model,
- and an existential interpretation of healing.

The overall message of the work is that healing begins when a person stops running from the inner world and begins listening to it.

Dreams, trauma, addiction, and brain change are all connected through one core process: the brain trying to survive, adapt, and heal through neuroplasticity. Dreams are where memory, emotion, fear, imagination, and identity all come together. For people dealing with PTSD, addiction recovery, or overwhelming emotional stress, dreams can feel extremely real and emotionally intense. This happens because the brain is processing unresolved experiences while the body is asleep, when conscious control is lower and the subconscious becomes more active.

The idea that dreams feel like “telepathy” comes from how deeply the brain reconstructs emotional memory. While there is no scientific proof of actual mind-to-mind communication, the brain can create the feeling of connection through memory, attachment, grief, and emotional imprinting. When someone dreams of a loved one or a person from their past, it is often the brain activating strong emotional pathways that were never fully resolved.

PTSD changes how the brain stores memory. The amygdala becomes overactive, the hippocampus struggles to organize past and present, and the prefrontal cortex (which helps with reasoning and emotional control) becomes less effective under stress. Because of this, trauma is often stored as emotional fragments instead of clear stories. During sleep, especially REM sleep, these fragments reappear as dreams, nightmares, or emotional

flashbacks. The brain is essentially trying to reorganize what it could not process safely when the trauma originally happened.

Addiction adds another layer to this process. Drug and alcohol use reshape the brain's reward system, especially dopamine pathways. The brain learns to prioritize substances over natural rewards like connection, purpose, or joy. Over time, dopamine regulation becomes weakened, leading to low motivation, emotional numbness, anxiety, and craving. The prefrontal cortex, which handles decision-making and impulse control, also becomes less effective, which is why people can understand consequences but still feel driven to use.

This is not just "damage" in a simple sense — it is maladaptive neuroplasticity. The brain has learned survival through the substance. Trauma often drives this cycle because substances temporarily reduce emotional pain. The brain forms a loop: pain leads to use, use leads to relief, and relief reinforces the behavior.

Different substances affect the brain in different ways, but all disrupt normal emotional and cognitive balance. Stimulants overactivate dopamine systems, opioids suppress pain and reward regulation, alcohol disrupts multiple neurotransmitters, and benzodiazepines affect memory and emotional stability. Over time, natural reward systems become less responsive, making everyday life feel empty or overwhelming.

However, the most important truth is that the brain can also rewire in recovery. Neuroplasticity works in both directions. As substance use stops and recovery begins, the brain slowly restores balance in dopamine systems, emotional regulation, sleep patterns, and cognitive function. This process is

often uncomfortable at first because emotions return strongly and dreams become more vivid. This is the nervous system recalibrating — not failing.

Healing happens through repetition. Therapy, support groups, journaling, exercise, sleep, spirituality, structure, and meaningful relationships all help the brain form new pathways. The brain strengthens whatever it repeatedly experiences. Addiction strengthens survival-through-substance pathways. Recovery strengthens survival-through-life pathways.

Dreams sit in the middle of all of this. They are not random — they are the brain's way of processing emotional memory, trauma, grief, fear, and healing. They can feel chaotic, symbolic, or deeply personal because they are the subconscious reorganizing experience into meaning. In PTSD and addiction recovery, dreams often intensify because the brain is finally processing what was previously suppressed.

In the end, what looks like emotional overload or brain damage is often a brain in transition. It is a system trying to rebalance itself after trauma and chemical disruption. The human brain is not fixed — it is adaptive. And through time, consistency, and recovery, it can slowly rewire from survival-based patterns toward stability, connection, and healing.

Education ✓ Dreams +

Written by Marcel Ray Duriez

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Author, musician, and artist